Healthy Eating after Colorectal Cancer

A dietary guide for optimising health after treatment for colorectal cancer
Introduction

Eat your way to a lower risk of cancer recurrence!

Following treatment for colorectal cancer, a healthy diet is needed to optimise recovery and health. Recent research suggests diet and lifestyle factors after diagnosis can also affect your risk of colorectal cancer returning\(^1\). So take charge of your health today, starting with your diet!

Diet and lifestyle factors thought to influence your risk of colorectal cancer recurrence are listed below:

DECREASES RISK OF RECURRENCE

- **Fruits**
- Coloured **Vegetables**
- Whole Grain Breads and Cereals
- Low Fat Milk Products
- Legumes (peas and beans)
- Tea (Herbal and Black)
- **Physical Activity**
  - Fish
  - Poultry

INCREASES RISK OF RECURRENCE

- **Red Meat**
- Processed Meat
- Butter and Cream
- Deep Fried Foods, Pies and Pastries
- Whole Fat Milk Products
- Desserts, Chocolate, Sweets
- Potato Chips and fries
- High Fat Take-Away Options
- Alcohol
- **Obesity**

Due to the nature of colorectal cancer evidence, for the effect of diet on cancer recurrence is limited. However, by following healthy eating guidelines you can not only optimise your recovery from colorectal cancer but also help prevent other health conditions such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes\(^2\). All while being a healthy role model for your family!
So What Should You Do?

What’s really important when it comes to colorectal cancer recurrence and diet is your overall dietary pattern\(^1\) (what you’re eating every day, not just on the odd special occasion). This means…

Moving away from this

And towards this!

Wholegrain breads and cereals, starchy

Fruits and coloured vegetables

Lean poultry and fish, eggs and nuts

Low fat dairy products

Limited high fat and sugar foods
Wholegrain breads and cereals are loaded with fibre and B vitamins, all important factors in maintaining healthy bowel function.

**Starchy vegetables** (kumara, potatoes, taro and corn) are higher in energy and sugar than coloured vegetables. Diets high in starchy vegetables could increase your risk of colorectal cancer recurrence.

Along with breads and cereals, starchy vegetables should fill ¼ of your plate.

**Hydration is essential for healthy bowels.** Keep hydrated by drinking water, tea and trim milk.

Low fat dairy products are a rich source of calcium. High calcium diets could lower your risk of colorectal cancer recurrence!

Aim to have 3 or more servings of these every day including trim milk, ‘Lite’ yoghurt or cottage cheese.

Studies suggest eating an unhealthy diet high in red and processed meat, potato chips/ fries, deserts, high fat dairy products and soft drinks could increase your risk of colorectal cancer recurrence!\(^1\)
Fish, seafood, poultry and legumes (beans, peas and lentils) provide iron, protein and zinc. Try to incorporate them into two meals per day.

Fruits are loaded with vitamins and minerals. Their packed with fibre for bowel health and natures sweetest treat! Have fruit with meals and as snacks in between meals.

Coloured Vegetables are a nutrition powerhouse. Diets high in these have been associated with a lower risk of colorectal cancer recurrence! Eat them throughout the day.

Processed meats (sausages, deli ham, salami, luncheon and bacon) are often high in fat and salt and strongly associated with colorectal cancer. It is therefore recommended you avoid these meats.

Avoid eating burnt or charred meat, especially when barbequing as it can contain cancer-causing chemicals!
Sample Day  This example shows an ideal day of eating to promote optimal health after colorectal cancer.

**Breakfast:** 1 bowl of wholegrain cereal, 1 handful of frozen berries, 1 pottle of lite yoghurt, 1 glass of fresh orange juice, 1 black tea

**Lunch:** One chicken and salad sandwich on wholegrain bread, 1 apple, 1 small low fat- high calcium ice-cream, 1 glass of water

**Dinner:** Blue cod fillet with potatoes, carrots and peas, 1 glass of water, 1 bowl of fruit salad

**Snacks:** 10 almonds, 2 wholegrain crackers with cottage cheese, 1 carrot, 2 cups of tea

**Exercise Goal:**
30 minutes of brisk walking, enough to break a sweat!
Your Recovery Diet

a Summary

✓ Aim to achieve and maintain a **healthy weight** through healthy eating and regular physical activity

✓ Have **three regular meals** each day

✓ Have 5+ servings of **fruit and coloured vegetables** per day. Try to have vegetables in every meal and choose fruit as a snack in between meals

✓ Choose **wholegrain** bread and cereal options where you can see the grains

✓ Choose low fat dairy products such as trim milk, lite yoghurt and cottage cheese. Aim to have 3 servings of dairy products each day

✓ **Limit red meat intake to 300g per week** and choose lean, low fat options. Trim visible fat off before cooking and avoid eating burnt or charred meat

✓ Avoid **processed meats** such as sausages, deli ham salami and bacon. Choose white meat options such as **chicken and fish** instead

✓ **Avoid having too much high fat foods** such as pies, pastries and burgers by choosing healthy options when eating out such as sushi, sandwiches and stir-fry

✓ **Avoid alcohol**, or when drinking, do so in moderation and follow the safe drinking guidelines (limit of 3 standard drinks for men per day and 2 drinks for women)

✓ Drink plenty of fluid every day including water, milk and tea. Try to avoid high sugar soft drinks and limit fruit juice to one glass per day (250ml)

✓ Try to achieve some form of **physical activity** every day

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In making long-term lifestyle changes it’s important not to take on too much at once. Set yourself small achievable goals every week such as:

“This week I will eat two pieces of fruit everyday”

By making small permanent changes you’re on your way to a healthy diet and lifestyle to optimise your recovery.
Seek Advice

If you’re suffering from any diet related complications of colorectal cancer, diabetes, or any other condition requiring a special diet, ask your health care provider for a referral to a registered dietitian for individualised dietary advice.

Recommended Readings

**Healthy Eating for Adult New Zealanders.** Code 1518. Ministry of Health

**Eating Well for Healthy Older People.** Code 1145. Ministry of Health

**A Guide to Heart Healthy Eating.** National Heart Foundation.

**Dietary Advice for People with an Ileostomy or Colostomy** - Southern DHB Nutrition and Food Services

**References.**

